

**HOUSE COMMITTEE  
ON  
AGRICULTURE**

**Senate Bill 544**

**Testimony of Joel A. Clairmont  
Deputy Director, Montana Department of Agriculture**

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

For the record, my name is Joel A. Clairmont, deputy director of the Montana Department of Agriculture. On behalf of the Director of Agriculture Nancy K. Peterson, I am here to testify in favor of Senate Bill 544.

This program would be administered jointly by the Department of Agriculture and the Montana Board of Livestock. As to Agriculture's role, Senate Bill 544 falls within the department's mission to "protect producers and consumers and to enhance and develop agriculture and allied industries." The Agriculture department brings its marketing staff to the table, with its ability to assist entrepreneurs in developing and marketing agricultural products. The department also has experience with certification programs, and has operated an organic certification program since 2002.

Montana State University would likely play a key role in the program, as well. I have spoken with Dr. Doug Steele, Extension Director at MSU, and he feels the inspections required for certification could logically be performed by MSU and Extension personnel.

Use of the "Montana" brand can be a significant marketing tool in value-added agricultural products because this state is often viewed nationally and internationally as home to the western way of life and a pristine environment. The Montana Department of Agriculture regularly receives phone calls requesting information about Montana meat products. Montana has a reputation that we should protect and use to assist producers developing new and expanded markets for products.

We appreciate your consideration, and urge you to support Senate Bill 544.